



EAST LYME CONNECTION

Spring 2025



In this issue of the **East Lyme Connection**, we will provide updates on recent accomplishments and what you can expect for the upcoming 2025 project activities. Thank you for your continued support and patience as we build toward a successful and on-time completion!

As we reach the halfway mark of our four-year project, we're excited to share the progress made and what's ahead. Over the past two years, we've tackled major milestones from foundational work to structural developments, all while staying committed to safety, efficiency, and quality.

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Route 161 Reconstruction

Last construction season, Route 161 on the south side of the bridge 250 overpass was fully reconstructed. Similar to this effort during this 2025 construction season, the section north of the bridge 250 overpass will be reconstructed. This will include an approximate 2-foot grade elevation increase in some areas similar to the previous reconstruction efforts. Several new storm drainage systems will be installed, new curbing, sidewalks, line striping and signage will also be installed. This work is scheduled to occur over the course of several weeks approximately starting mid-April. The majority of work will occur overnight, and the travelling public should expect to travel over gravel during a portion of this construction effort.

Bridge 0250 Construction

Bridge construction for the stage 3 section of Bridge 0250 over Route 161 is beginning this year. At this point in time, the existing bridge abutment stem walls are being demolished. Temporary earth retaining systems (TERS) are being installed on both the north and south side of the existing bridge in order to support existing I-95 southbound lanes during the excavation efforts to construct the new bridge abutments. Once excavation is completed, the new bridge footings, stem walls and superstructure of the new bridge will be completed. This will entail a short one-week duration night-time closures of Route 161 in order to set structural steel. This secondary section of Bridge 0250 will connect to the previously constructed section of bridge completed last year.



I-95 Southbound Construction Activities

During this phase of construction along I-95, we are currently building the future temporary southbound lanes. This includes a 15-foot dramatic increase in elevation of the new highway on the west side of the bridge and a 9-foot lowering of the new highway on the east side of the bridge. Sections on the northern end of our construction limits will create a future transition to allow for existing I-95 southbound lanes to utilize the two new temporary thru lanes created during this phase. Temporary traffic signage, line striping, and concrete barriers will be placed to appropriately direct traffic at the time of the transition. Lastly, towards the end of this construction season a new temporary exit 74 southbound off ramp will be constructed over a two-week duration.

This will allow traffic traveling along the new southbound lanes to continue to safely use the exit 74 southbound off ramp. The off ramp, although temporary, will be a large improvement when compared to the existing off ramp. Its design creates a much safer condition than the existing ramp given its increased length and improved alignment. Additionally, timed with the start of construction of the new temporary exit 74 southbound off ramp, will be the opening of the new permanent exit 74 southbound on ramp. This on ramp is required to open at this time since the new temporary off ramp is constructed through the existing exit 74 on ramp. This new on ramp will vastly improve the safety for the traveling public trying to merge onto I-95 southbound as the new ramp is more than twice as long as its predecessor.



Local Road Activities and Impacts

Several improvements should be expected to occur along local roads within the project limits this construction season. Beyond the reconstruction of the second half of Route 161, there will be the implementation of a new traffic signal light at the newly constructed Frontage Road. This intersection, as well as the new intersection at the opposite end of the newly constructed Frontage Road, will be brought online simultaneously. These new intersections will provide local traffic with the use of the new section of Frontage Road, vastly improving traffic maneuverability. The existing section of Frontage Road and its signal at the intersection with Route 161 at this point is scheduled to be closed, and through traffic on existing Frontage Road will be limited to local business access only. The new intersection adjacent to the Costco entrance will also provide access to the new permanent exit 74 southbound on ramp and the new temporary southbound off ramp. Additional turning lanes at all of these new intersections should create far less congestion for motorists.

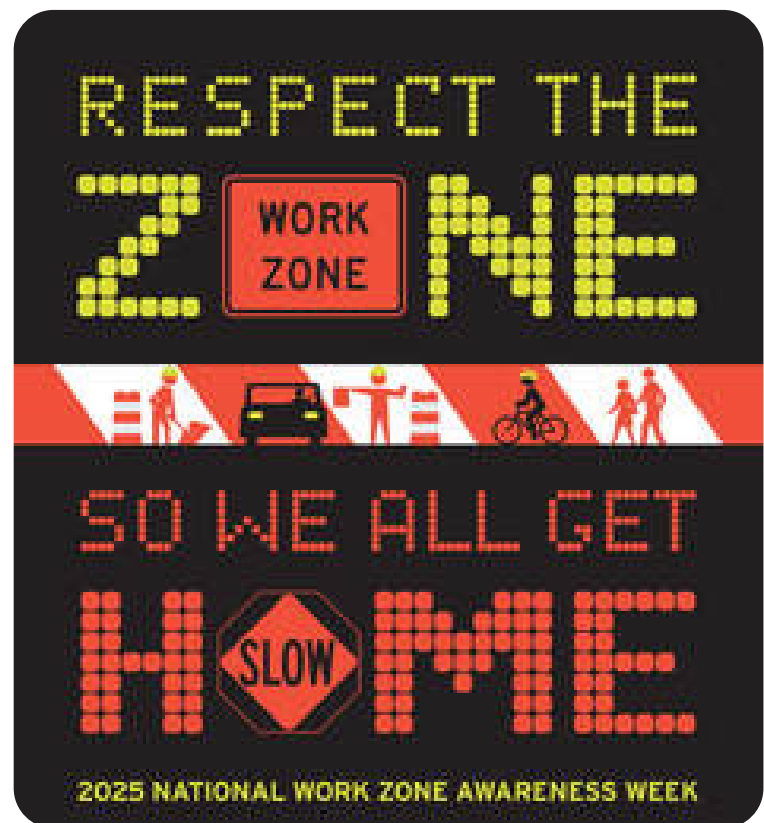


National Work Zone Awareness Week:

**** April 21-25 ****

National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW) is an annual spring campaign held at the start of construction season to encourage safe driving through highway work zones. The key message is for drivers to use extra caution in work zones. 4,319 people were killed in work zone crashes in the U.S. between 2018 and 2022 (NHTSA, 2024).

What many fail to recognize is the vast majority of people killed in work zone crashes are motorists and their passengers. It is imperative for drivers to slow down and stay focused while approaching and passing through a roadway work zone. Please join us in promoting the importance of work zone safety across the country



Retaining Walls, Earthwork Enable DOT to Raise Section of I-95 in Connecticut

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Chuck MacDonald – Construction Equipment Guide Correspondent

Interstate 95 runs through the southern section of Connecticut, often within sight of Long Island Sound. This important freeway connects New York City and its vital commerce with Boston in the north and the rest of New England.

In East Lyme, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) has undertaken a major construction project at Exit 74 where the interstate travels over Route 161. The project will improve sightlines, make the road safer for travelers and ease congestion.

CTDOT plans to have the project completed by 2027 at the cost of nearly \$150 million. By the completion of the project, I-95 northbound and southbound will have a new look. The northbound and southbound lanes will be raised approximately 14 ft. from their original position on the west side of Route 161 and cut approximately 10 ft. on the east side.

Contractors are achieving these changes through the construction of temporary earth retaining systems (TERS). Andrew M. Millovitsch, project engineer, is overseeing the project for CTDOT. To create the 16 retaining walls necessary for the project, workers needed to pulverize a massive ledge with explosives. Each blast required a full closure of I-95. Manafort Brothers was the general contractor for the project and worked closely with additional contractors on the job.



The blasts enabled workers to remove 60,000 cu. yds. of material to make way for a new retaining wall adjacent to I-95 northbound. The construction team experienced a major setback when a soil nail wall failed to hold, costing the team two months.

The team accelerated the work for five months to bring the project back on schedule. The project is now 50 percent complete.

The contractor is building extended lanes for both acceleration and deceleration for the interchange ramps. The team also is constructing a 6-ft. raised median and 12-ft. shoulders for both north and southbound traffic. "We have had some existing soil conditions that have proved challenging," said Millovitsch. "The newly constructed roadway will provide safe areas in the median to handle breakdowns. Drivers will have better sightlines to view the traffic they are driving in and have flatter slopes to improve stopping distances. Also, the new overpass will allow for safer clearance for motorists on Route 161."

As the 2025 construction season opens, workers will shift traffic onto the recently constructed travel lanes and over Route 161. An additional TERS will be constructed closer to the southbound traffic.

"At that time, the northbound traffic will be brought to final grade and the next third of the bridge construction can take place between the north and southbound lanes," said Millovitsch.



Having a Blast

Blasting proved exciting not only for the construction team and onlookers but also had many practical benefits. A major obstacle was removed, and the remains from the blast were crushed and used for subbase for the road and for fill as part of the embankments.

Both steel and asphalt were recycled as well. The project worked with environmental specialists to reestablish plantings and improve nearby wetlands, floodplains and streambeds. The team plans to use approximately 80,000 tons of asphalt for the roads and 10,000 cu. yds. of concrete for precast items including drainage structures and retaining walls, as well as cast-in-place elements for the new Bridge No. 00250.

The construction team used a traditional fleet of equipment for the job including excavators, front loaders, cranes, paving machines and rollers. Construction teams are increasingly using technology to complete the jobs with greater precision and speed. The technology used for this job included 3D modeling, drone-assisted GPS survey equipment, geo-located software and "open road designer" to assist with placement of proper quantities of material.

CTDOT and contractors were careful to maintain safety both for workers and motorists. Because the work was done in stages, safety specialists were able to delineate work zones and keep the construction activity behind temporary barriers. The work team also used speed camera vehicles to slow down traffic and keep the work zone protected.



The I-95 East Lyme project has been both satisfying and challenging for Millovitsch and his team.

"The vertical realignment of I-95 was a complex challenge," he said. "This work has allowed us to improve the safety of a historically substandard piece of road. It has also been an area that is accident prone. We hope that will be improved as well."